



U.S. AIR FORCE

This Week in USAF and PACAF History 10 Oct – 16 Oct 2011



Countdown to 7 December 1941.

12 October 1941 Four members of the Japanese government met at Premier Konoye's residence: General Tojo, the War Minister; Admiral Toyoda, the Foreign Minister; Admiral Oikawa, the Navy Minister; and Mister Suzuki, President of the Cabinet Planning Board. The military officers told the Premier that war preparations would continue and he must either lead Japan in the war or make way for someone else to do so.

That same day, senior naval officers met on Admiral Yamamoto's flagship for a tabletop re-rehearsal of Operation Hawaii. Yamamoto was preparing the Imperial Navy's operations order for destroying the U.S. Pacific Fleet and supporting the Army's invasion of southeast Asia. The officers argued about dividing Japanese naval strength between the two missions, and for the time



being the Pearl Harbor attack force was allotted only three carriers and two battleships. Beyond that, nearly all the officers thought it was already too late to strike the U.S. Pacific Fleet – the Americans were now surely on their guard and could not be surprised, and the worsening weather would prevent ship-to-ship refueling along the task force's northern Pacific route to Hawaii. After hearing all the discussions, Admiral Yamamoto ended the debate with these words: "So long as I am Commander in Chief of the Combined Fleet, Pearl Harbor will be attacked. I ask you to give me your fullest support. Return to your stations and work hard for the success of Japan's war plan. Good luck!"

16 October 1941 Premier Konoye and his cabinet submitted their resignations to the Emperor. General Tojo was selected as the new premier. American leaders hoped for peace in the Pacific in order to concentrate on Germany, but the Tokyo regime looked increasingly like a war government. U.S. commanders in the region were ordered to avoid provocative actions.

12 October 1918 The 185th Aero Squadron flew the **first U.S. night pursuit operations** in France. The only U.S. unit designated for night operations, the 185th emblem was a bat against a yellow disk (at right). Night flying became essential as enemy bombers conducted raids at night and ground troops moved at night to avoid detection by aerial reconnaissance. Night flying put a priority on seeing the enemy by starlight, moonlight or searchlights (at 200-600 yards) and using aerodrome lights for landing at the home field. The most daunting prospect for a pilot was an emergency landing of a battle-damaged aircraft in unfamiliar territory.



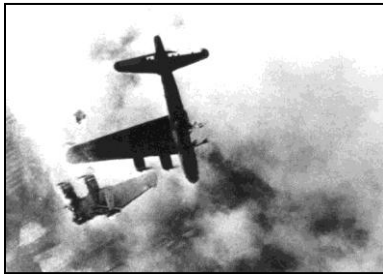


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14 Oct 1938 Edward Elliott conducted the **first flight test of the Curtiss XP-40** (below), the prototype of the P-40s used in World War II. The wartime P-40's semi-modular design was easy to maintain even in harsh conditions. Later versions were well-armored and equipped with self-sealing fuel tanks and more powerful engines. With good agility, very good dive speed, deadly armament and a durable structure, the P-40 had excellent results in head-on engagements with Japanese fighters and in ground attacks on surface forces. The P-40 saw action in many theaters of World War II, most famously with the American Volunteer Group's *Flying Tigers* in China.



14 October 1943 On **"Black Thursday,"** the 8th Air Force conducted its second raid on **Schweinfurt**, the heart of the German ball bearing industry. Of 291 B-17 bombers in the attacking force, 60 were lost to fighter interceptors and flak, and 138 more were damaged, causing the Eighth to temporarily discontinue daylight bombing of targets deep in Germany.

When Hitler's minister of armaments and economics, Albert Speer, was interviewed after the war, he made this comment:

"The strategic bombing of Germany was the greatest lost battle of the whole war for Germany."

12 October 1944 **Ace in a Day.** Lt Chuck Yeager (right) shot down five of his 12.5 aircraft victories in a single engagement. As he closed on one Me-109, the German pilot broke left and collided with his wingman, giving Yeager two victories without firing a shot. In an intense dogfight, Yeager used his exceptional vision (20/10) and flying skills in three more aerial victories.



Earlier that year, Yeager was shot down and, with the help of French resistance, he evaded over the Pyrenees Mountains into Spain. The Spanish government then traded Yeager and five other Americans to the United States in return for gasoline.

Three years later, on 14 October 1947, Captain Yeager became the first man to fly through the sound barrier. He achieved this feat in the rocket-powered Bell XS-1 after being dropped from a B-29 and later received the Mackay Trophy.

11 October 1947 The **C-97 Stratofreighter**, a transport variant of the B-29, began service in Air Transport Command. It could be configured to transport materiel, troops, or casualties.

14 October 1947 SECDEF James V. Forrestal approved the Air Force's control over all "pilotless aircraft" and strategic missiles. The Army gained control over all tactical missiles.

10 October 1950 The USAF activated **the first Air National Guard units to support the Korean War.** Eventually, the U.S. mobilized 66 flying units and 45,000 guardsmen.



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15 October 1952 A B-47 photo reconnaissance mission out of Eielson AFB flew over the Chukotsky Peninsula in the Soviet Union. The mission confirmed that the development of Soviet staging bases on the Arctic peninsula from which their bombers could easily reach targets on the North American continent.

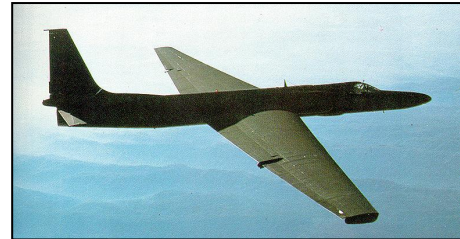


RB-26 display on Hickam AFB



11 October 1961 **PROJECT FARM GATE.** President Kennedy authorized the deployment of a “Jungle Jim” detachment from the 4400th Combat Crew Training Squadron (later the 1st Air Commando Group) to South Vietnam. The deployment included nearly 160 airmen and eight T-28s, four SC-47s, and four RB-26s carrying Vietnamese AF markings. The unit arrived in on 14 November and flew its first T-28 strike from Bien Hoa on 26 December. The aircraft were used until 1 April 1964.

14–15 October 1962 The **Cuban missile crisis** began when Maj. Richard S. Heyser and Maj. Rudolf Anderson, Jr., conducting U-2 reconnaissance flights over Cuba, proved that Soviet missile sites were under construction there. On October 18th, eight Air Force Reserve troop-carrier wings and six aerial-port squadrons were mobilized.



16 Oct 1964 **China exploded its first nuclear device.** The Air Force collected data on the explosion using Air Weather Service C-130, WB-50, and WB-57 aircraft from Yokota AB, Japan; Wheelus AB, Libya; Eielson AFB, Alaska; and McClellan AFB, CA.

13 October 1972 **Air Force Ace.** An F-4 weapon system officer, Capt Jeffrey Feinstein, shot down his fifth MiG-21 to become the **third USAF ace of the Vietnam War.** Feinstein shared the 1972 **Mackay Trophy** with Captains Steven Ritchie and Charles DeBellevue.

14 October – 14 November 1973 **Operation NICKEL GRASS.** Military Airlift Command delivered over 22,000 tons of materiel from 20 locations in the U.S. to Israel during the 1973 “Yom Kippur War.” MAC completed this 30-day airlift, with a one-way distance of 6,450 miles, in 567 C-5 and C-141 missions. By comparison, the Soviets airlifted 15,000 tons to the Arabs in 40 days over a route of 1,700 miles in 935 missions.

